

VZCZCXRO4796
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #0192/01 0260617
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 260617Z JAN 09 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1390
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 000192

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/26/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: PM REPLACES WASIT POLICE CHIEF, FUELING BROADER
RIVALRY WITH INTERIOR MINISTRY AND ISCI

REF: A. 08 BAGHDAD 3722

[B](#). 08 BAGHDAD 3614

[C](#). 08 BAGHDAD 3480

[D](#). 08 BAGHDAD 3052

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Robert Ford for reason 1.
4 (b).

[1](#). (C) Summary. The Prime Minister's office replaced Wasit Province Chief of Police MG Abed al-Haneen Faisal on January 14 with the Da'wa-affiliated former Karbala Police Chief, MG Ra'ad Shaker Jawdat al-Hasnawi. The move to replace the police chief, broadly viewed as non-partisan and effective, was made without consulting the Minister of Interior or the provincial government. The Wasit Provincial Council (PC) passed a motion condemning the appointment but councilors concede that the new chief will be seated at least provisionally. Da'wa supporters in the province, including the Governor and the provincial SWAT commander, backed the move. The Prime Minister's decision reflects growing tension between the Prime Minister and the Interior Minister, who has his own supporters in the province. Many in Wasit are concerned that the new Police Chief will be overly aggressive and politicized in his approach to security. Ra'ad confirmed those suspicions by attempting to enlist the PM's support to have additional Iraqi Army (IA) troops sent to Kut to maintain order. The request, opposed by the IA 8th Division, was ultimately denied after some negotiation. Wasit is one of the real election battleground provinces between Dawa and its opponent, the Shia Islamist ISCI party. The appointment of Ra'ad may incite an emotional response from Maliki's detractors during the provincial elections and the sensitive post-elections negotiation period. End summary.

The Order

[2](#). (C) To widespread surprise, on January 14 the Ministry of Interior and the Wasit Governor Latif Turfa received an order signed by Prime Minister Maliki, reassigning MG Haneen and installing MG Ra'ad as Police Chief in the province. Governor Latif, an independent but also a Maliki supporter, did not protest the order. According to PRT contacts on the PC, the Governor attended a dinner given in honor of the new Chief of Police by the SWAT Commander Major Aziz on the night of January 17. The outgoing Police Chief MG Haneen -- who has accepted the transfer order -- also attended the dinner, along with other notables such as Traffic Police Chief Brigadier General Sa'ah and Sheikh Numani, another known Maliki supporter with strong ties to the Sadr family. (Note: Pro-Maliki activities by Numani and Aziz are detailed in ref A. End note.)

PC Response

[3](#). (C) According to Wasit PC Chairman Mohammad Hassan Jabbar (an independent, viewed by some as ISCI-leaning),

the council held a January 17 session in which they unanimously passed a resolution stating that the PM's decision was unacceptable due to its lack of consultative involvement with the provincial government and the lack of any reasoning given for appointing MG Ra'ad. While media reports stated that the resolution effectively rejected the appointment, the resolution is not binding. Hassan Jabbar's understanding is that under the Provincial Powers Law, the new PC will have the power to remove a Police Chief -- much like a provincial Director General -- if they find him ineffective and corrupt. For the time being, MG Ra'ad will be seated since MG Haneen has stepped aside and the current PC does not enjoy the authority to appoint or remove the Chief of Police. The new PC may attempt to unseat him later this year, however, if they still have enough votes.

MG Ra'ad Calls in the Army
QMG Ra'ad Calls in the Army

14. (S) MG Ra'ad wasted no time in trying to make his presence felt in the province. According to Iraqi Army 8th Division Commander General Othman's version as told to Coalition Forces in MND-C, Ra'ad contacted the Prime Minister on January 18, claiming (against all evidence) widespread rioting in al-Kut, and asked him to send in troops to maintain order from the Maysan-based IA 10th Division. The PM reportedly approved an order to move troops from Maysan before contacting General Othman, whose 32nd Brigade was already present in Wasit. After Othman objected to the order to move troops from Maysan into his theatre of operations, the General, the Prime Minister's

BAGHDAD 00000192 002 OF 003

office, and MG Ra'ad discussed the situation. After two days of negotiating, the decision was made that no additional IA troops would be sent to Wasit Province.

View from MOI Dissenters

15. (C) The PC Chairman told the PRT he believes that the change in Police leadership in Wasit was a surprise to the Interior Ministry (MOI) -- a point of view that has been reflected in Iraqi media coverage. However, a January 20 Poloff conversation in Baghdad with two MOI sources suggested that, while the Minister may not have been formally contacted, many in the Ministry had heard that the move was coming. The contact apparently closer to the situation, Majid al-Musawi (source protect), who said that he worked in the MOI "planning and personnel" department, suggested that Da'wa party functionaries in and around the Ministry had been trying to find a suitable position for Ra'ad for sometime, with Diyala, Baghdad, Wasit, and Babil all rumored to be considered. He claimed to have heard about the impending change several days in advance. Jalil Khalaf al-Mozani, formerly Police Chief of Basra, who was himself reassigned by the PM's office to a MOI desk job in early 2008, added that MG Haneen was a friend of his and to his knowledge had no particular quarrel with the PM.

16. (C) Other media reports suggested that Maliki moved to replace the Police Chief because of a dispute between Da'wa and Iraqiya members on the PC. Ministry of Interior contacts had not heard of this, nor have PRT Wasit contacts. Similarly, we have not seen any evidence of rumors that Maliki replaced MG Haneen because he was cooperating with the Interior Minister's new political party.

Bulani-Maliki

17. (S) Interior Minister Bulani's political party may be a factor in the change, however. Jalil, like many others,

believes the PM was motivated at least in part by an ongoing feud with the Minister. The conflict was exacerbated by rumors that Bulani was less than cooperative in his efforts to investigate an alleged coup d'etat against the Prime Minister in late December. Bulani has been promoting his Constitution (Destoor) slate in the provincial elections, particularly in the South Central provinces. Raised in Amara and with family ties in Diwaniyah and Wasit, Bulani may have made some inroads with the province's voters. In a November conversation with Poloff, PC Chairman Hassan Jabbar advised that the Constitution Party would likely gain a couple seats in Wasit's provincial elections (ref B). Maliki has countered Bulani by strengthening the hand of Major Aziz's SWAT forces, a unit that last year was transferred away from Wasit's provincial control and now reports to the Baghdad-based MOI Emergency Response Team, which is reportedly controlled by the PM. The PRT has detailed SWAT's role in helping set up the PM's Support Councils in the province (ref C).

Not a Provincial Operations Center

18. (C) According to the Ministry of Interior sources, there are no indications at this time that the replacement of the Police Chief has led to the establishment of a Provincial Operations Center in Wasit, in which all ISF operations (police, army, etc.) would be consolidated under one command, bypassing the normal MOD and MOI chains of command. Since 2007, this arrangement has been established with the Prime Minister's backing in six provinces, including Karbala, where MG Ra'ad served as the first provincial commander.

A Change is Coming

Q-----

19. (C) PRT contacts believe the switch from MG Haneen to MG Ra'ad may have a major impact on provincial security practices, and probably not a positive one. MG Haneen was first appointed as Chief of Police by the British Governorate Coordinator for Wasit Province in early April 2004, was removed by the PC in 2005, and reinstated in 2007. He hails from a village just north of al-Kut and comes from a leading family in the al-Amara tribe, both of which enhance his effectiveness in working with local communities to prevent crime and militia activity. A former IA general, he worked closely with the CPA government and has since maintained a close relationship with the U.S. military and now the PRT in Wasit. He is

BAGHDAD 00000192 003 OF 003

considered non-political and not corrupt. His successor MG Ra'ad also enjoys a reputation from his Karbala days as an effective officer in fighting militia violence and maintaining peace during religious holidays. But he is also seen as a Da'wa partisan -- despite his conflict with the Da'wa Governor in Karbala -- who is willing to use extra-legal tactics to achieve his aims. (Ref D details the ouster of MG Ra'ad from Karbala.)

Comment

10. (C) The Prime Minister's move to change the Chief of Police late in the election season, coupled with his apparent decision to give initial approval to activate ISF to enforce it, will raise concerns among Dawa opponents about Maliki's manner of handling percolating conflicts with the Interior Ministry, ISCI/Badr, and provincial governments. From the provincial point of view, it is not surprising that the ISCI-led governing bloc in the PC, which has a strong chance of losing power in the upcoming elections,

comes out on the short end of a dispute with the PM, the Governor, and the SWAT commander. It is troublesome that Wasit has a new Chief of Police who has already taken a confrontational tack and who has a reputation from his days in Karbala as a rather blunt instrument of force. The appointment of Ra'ad may incite an emotional response from Maliki's detractors during the provincial elections and the sensitive post-elections negotiation period. End comment.

CROCKER